DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 420 912 EA 029 117

AUTHOR Bierlein, Louann A.; Mulholland, Lori A.
TITLE Charter School Update & Observations Regarding Initial Trends and Impacts. Policy Brief.
INSTITUTION Arizona State Univ., Tempe. Morrison Inst. for Public Policy.
PUB DATE 1995-04-00
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Board of Education Policy; *Charter Schools; Comparative Analysis; *Educational Policy; *Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Program Descriptions; *State Legislation

ABSTRACT

As charter schools continue to gain momentum, trends are becoming visible. Some of the issues surrounding this reform movement are discussed in this policy brief. It examines charter schools in 12 states, offering an overview of what these schools are and how they work. Of the myriad forms that have emerged, their strength or weakness is attributable to whether sponsors other than local boards are allowed to participate, the extent of automatic state law/rule exemptions granted, and the schools' degree of fiscal and legal autonomy. Some of the initial trends and impact of charters in these states are profiled, such as fears concerning elite schools and resegregation not coming true; "stronger" charter school law elements that make a difference; the unique community and/or business partnerships being formed that may lead to enhanced support for all public schools; unique learning environments being created; a larger percentage of existing funds being focused on instructional activities; ripple effects across the broader system becoming visible; the spreading knowledge of the charter concept; charter-school critics mounting more sophisticated opposition; and problems evident in the system. A grid is featured comparing types of charter-school laws. (RJM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. Bierlein

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 420 912

Charter School Update & Observations Regarding Initial Trends and Impacts

Policy Brief *April 1995*

Louann A. Bierlein, Ed.D., Policy Analyst/Consultant
Lori A. Mulholland, M.A., Senior Research Specialist

Introduction

As the charter school movement continues to gain momentum, initial impacts and trends are becoming visible. A steady flow of states are debating the idea; a growing number of schools are being approved (the total is now 205 approvals, with 190 being in states with stronger laws); many schools are flourishing with long waiting lists, others are struggling with management and facility issues; and many unique learning environments and community partnerships are being formed. It is still too early to tell how many additional states will join the list this spring, or what long term impact charter schools will have for students and the system as a whole. But, one thing is clear -- the charter concept has caught the attention of many across the nation, and is therefore slated to remain on the reform agenda for the indefinite future.

This briefing builds upon previous work by the Morrison Institute, updating activities across the 12 initial charter states (Wyoming has now joined the list) and offering observations on some initial trends and impacts.

What are Charter Schools and What is their Appeal?

In its "purest" form, a charter school is a public school created and operated under a charter or contract. The *organizers* of such a school may be teachers, parents, or others from the public or private sector, while the *sponsors* (those who authorize and oversee the charter) may be local school boards, state education boards, or some other public authority.

The charter itself describes items such as the school's instructional plan, specific educational results, and the management and financial plan for the school. Charter schools may be formed using an entire public school's existing personnel and facilities, a portion of such a school, or a completely new entity with its own facilities and staff. Or, it may involve an existing nonsectarian private school converting to public charter status.

Once granted approval, a charter school becomes an independent legal entity with the ability to hire and dismiss, sue and be sued, award contracts for outside services, and control its own finances. Funding is based on student enrollment just as it would be for a school district. With a focus on results, charter schools are freed from most district and state regulations often perceived as inhibiting innovation (such as excessive certification requirements, bargaining agreements, and some curriculum requirements).

When the term of a charter school's contract expires, it may be renewed *if* the school can demonstrate student results, has not violated any laws or grossly mismanaged its affairs or budget, and continues to attract students, parents, and teachers. Failure in any of these areas puts the school out of business.

As depicted by this description, there are many elements that make this an appealing reform concept. In an ideal setting, charter schools: focus on results, not inputs; remain or become public schools; enhance educational choice options; permit true decentralization; offer new professional opportunities for teachers; enable local boards to become true policy boards; and provide for a more market-driven educational system. These elements -- all within a public setting -- have made charter schools a very attractive reform initiative for policymakers, educators, and parents alike.

EA 029 117

What is Happening in the Initial Charter School States?

As of April 1, 1995, 12 states had passed charter school-type legislation. Each law is different, and only a few come close to supporting the creation of completely "pure" charter schools (as described in the previous section). The following table depicts existing charter school states according to the strength of their law (e.g., whether sponsors other than local boards are allowed; if automatic state law/rule exemptions are granted; the degree of fiscal and legal autonomy allowed).

"Stronger" Charter Laws	"Weaker" Charter-like Laws
Arizona ('94)	Hawaii ('94)
California ('92)	Georgia ('93)
Colorado ('93)	Kansas ('94)
Massachusetts ('93)	New Mexico ('93)
Michigan ('94/'95)	Wisconsin ('93)
Minnesota ('91)	Wyoming ('95)

States with Stronger Charter Laws

Arizona: Passed in June 1994, this state's charter law is considered one of the strongest to date. Organizers may be any individual, public body, or private organization. Three potential sponsors include: any school district governing board, the state board of education, and a newly created state board for charter schools. Local boards are allowed to charter an unlimited number, with the level of autonomy for these schools determined within the charter. Each of the two state boards is allowed to charter up to 25 schools per year, with such schools being financially and legally autonomous. All charter schools are automatically exempt from most state laws and rules. A one million dollar stimulus fund was established to support start-up costs.

As of April 3, 1995, 40 schools had received initial approval -- 24 by the state board, 15 by the state charter board, and one by a local board -- with most slated to open during Fall 1995 (note: final approval/contracts are dependent upon background checks, more detailed proposals, etc). Legislation containing technical revisions and some substantive issues such as a $800,000 revolving "loan" fund for charter school start-up needs is expected to pass.

California: In September 1992, California adopted the nation's second charter schools law. California's law allows up to 100 charter schools, and permits any individual to initiate a charter school petition. Potential sponsors include the local school district or, if an appeal is sought, the applicable county board of education. Entire districts may also apply for charter status. By law, California charter schools are financially autonomous, though funds continue to flow through the district to the school, and charter schools often contract with their districts to provide some services. The extent of each school's legal autonomy is determined within its charter.

As of April 4, 1995, 79 charters had been assigned numbers (expected to increase to 83 when state board meets on April 14th), with a substantial majority of these known to be operating. A variety of bills to increase or remove the limit and to address other issues are being debated, although it has been recently determined that their state board of education has the authority to waive the current limit on the number of schools allowed.

Colorado: Legislation passed in June 1993 permits up to 50 charter schools to be created prior to July 1997. Afterward, the ceiling is removed. Under the law, any individual or group can enter into a charter school agreement with a local school board if "adequate" support from parents, teachers, and pupils is obtained. A charter school remains under the legal authority of the district board, but is to receive at least 80% of normal per pupil funding from the district.

As of April 1, 1995, 25 charter schools had been approved by local boards, with 14 of these in operation (two began in 1993/94, 12 others in 1994/95). There are also several "known" applications pending and several potential appeals to the state board (which can require local boards to grant charters if no valid reasons for denial exists). Several charter bills are pending, with the possibility of at least some technical corrections being passed.

Massachusetts: Legislation enacted in 1993 permits 25 public charter schools to be established. Each may be organized by two or more certified teachers, 10 or more parents, or by any other individual or group that successfully enters into a charter agreement with the state secretary of education (note: existing private schools are not

allowed to apply). Legal and financial autonomy is automatically granted to charter schools. By law, charter school were not authorized to begin until school year 1995/96.

As of April 4, 1995, a total of 21 schools had received approval (14 during the first round of applications and 7 having just received approval); 17 schools are slated to begin during Fall 1995. Legislation including technical revisions and a change to how schools are funded is expected to pass (i.e., state deducts $ from districts' allocation, rather than charter schools billing the districts).

Michigan: This state's initial charter law was passed in December 1993 and declared unconstitutional less than one year later as part of a lawsuit brought by, among others, the teachers' union and several state board members. In its ruling, a county circuit court found that the law usurped the state board's power to supervise public education and that charter schools were legally not "public." State legislators moved quickly to pass new charter school legislation (effective April 1, 1995) which addresses the key issues brought forth in the suit. However, an appeal to the court decision is pending and the new legislation was passed in such a manner that if the lower court's decision is overturned, then the initial law (with minor modifications) will supersede the new law. The court of appeals will begin hearing this case in June 1995.

Key provisions of Michigan's new law include that organizers (any individual or entity) may continue to choose from four potential sponsoring bodies: local governing boards of larger school districts, intermediate school district boards, community colleges, and state public universities (although universities are now limited to chartering no more than 75 schools statewide). Charter schools become legally and financially autonomous. There is still some unclarity as to whether such schools are exempted from most state laws and rules.

To date, eight schools (approved under the old law) were authorized to receive funding as alternative public schools. As of April 3, 1995 (with the new law being three days old), four schools were officially operating under the new charter law (one was part of the group of eight alternative public schools funded). It is estimated that approximately 30-50 schools will be chartered yet this spring.

Minnesota: Building upon existing public school choice programs, Minnesota initiated the first charter schools legislation in 1991. The law initially authorized creation of up to eight legally and financially autonomous schools (referred to as "outcome-based schools") to be organized by certified teachers and sponsored by local school districts. Existing non-sectarian private schools are also allowed to become public charter schools. Minnesota's legislation was modified in 1993 and 1994 to allow up to 35 charter schools across the state. An appeals process to the state board of education was also added whereby the state board can ultimately sponsor a given school.

As of 4/1/95, 17 schools had received approval, with 14 of these in operation (two began in 1992/93; five in 1993/94; six in 1994/95). No legislative changes are anticipated, although a request by the governor for $100,000 to support charter school start-up costs is still pending.

States with "Weaker" Charter Laws

Georgia: Legislation passed in 1993 allows an unlimited number of charter schools to be converted from existing public schools. Public school personnel may apply to the state board for charter status if they obtain prior approval from their local school board, a majority of the school's faculty and staff, and a majority of parents at a meeting called to initiate a charter school petition. The schools are not legally autonomous from their districts, and the amount of funding they receive is to be specified in the terms of the charter agreements.

As of April 5, 1995, one school had received approval by its local board and is seeking approval from the state board. Two other schools are in the process of applying to their local boards. Legislation enacted this spring included technical revisions, $50,000 to provide ten $5,000 planning grants, and a requirement that the department give charter schools preference for a variety of state grants.

Hawaii: Legislation was passed in 1994, allowing up to 25 "student-centered" charter-type schools to be created from existing public schools. A local school board must be established, as well as a detailed implementation plan (i.e., charter) approved by three-fifths of the school's staff and parents. The plan becomes effective 30 days after submission to

the state board unless found not to comply with certain educational standards (note: this board is similar to a district board since Hawaii has only one district). Once accepted, the school is to receive state per pupil funding, in addition to other applicable state and federal programmatic funds. It is unclear if the schools will become legally autonomous (an attorney general's opinion has been requested); however, teachers remain employees of the state and collective bargaining remains in place.

As of April 1, 1995, department personnel note that one school (Waialae Elementary) submitted a plan, which by law became effective 30 days after submission. Funding and legal autonomy are issues still being resolved. Several bills to strengthen the law have been introduced, but are believed dead.

Kansas: Legislation passed in April of 1994, allows 15 charter schools to be created. A charter school petition may be submitted to a district governing board by any person or entity. If local approval is obtained, the state board of education must review it to verify legal compliance; if not in compliance, they can amend and resubmit. Beyond this provision, however, there is no appeals process. If more than 15 schools receive charter approval from their district boards, the state board must choose those considered to have the most potential for success. These charter schools have neither legal nor financial autonomy from their districts.

As of April 1, 1995, one application had been approved by the local board, but denied by the state board since it was an incomplete application.

New Mexico: Legislation passed in 1993 allows five existing public schools to be granted charter school status by the state board of education. These charter schools remain under the legal authority of school districts, and certain administrative costs may be withheld by the districts. During 1993/94, initial planning grants of $5,000 were provided to 10 schools to promote the charter concept. During Fall 1994, four schools began operating under charter status, receiving a grant of $15,600 to support their first year of implementation.

As of April 1, 1995, (with their legislative session complete), no modifications were made to their law. However, an appropriation to provide additional grant funds to approved charter schools was vetoed by the newly elected republican governor.

Wisconsin: Legislation passed in August 1993 required the state superintendent of education to approve the first 10 charter school requests received. These charter schools could be created by a local school board generating its own proposal; or by an individual submitting a petition signed by either 10% of the teachers in the school district or by 50% of the teachers at one school. A school board could convert all of its schools to charter status (up to a maximum of two per district) if the petition is signed by at least 50 percent of teachers employed in the district, and if arrangements are provided for children not wishing to attend charter schools. Charter schools are exempt from most state laws, but remain under local district control and their level of funding is determined by the charter agreement. Shortly after the legislation passed, ten district-generated charter school proposals were approved.

As of April 1, 1995, four (of the potential 20 -- 2 per district) charter schools had began to operate under their charter status during 1994/95. A variety of substantial revisions to the charter law are still under consideration by the legislature.

Wyoming: Signed by the governor in March 1995, Wyoming's law is the latest to join the charter list. This law allows any individual to circulate a petition to start a charter school, although signatures of 10% of the teachers within the district or 50% within a given school *and* 10% of the parents within a district or 50% within a given school must be obtained before submission to the local board can occur. There is no appeals process, legal or fiscal autonomy, nor exemptions from state laws/rules.

What are Some Initial Trends/Impacts?

Given the newness of this reform activity, almost no formal studies or data exist on the impacts of such schools. Instead, informal reports are revealing numerous positive stories and a few not-so-positive findings as well. General trends reveal that:

✓ **Many Alleged Fears Concerning Elite Schools and Resegregation are *Not* Coming True.** Many charter school critics have voiced (and continue to do so) that charter schools will become schools for the elite, and that they will do little to support inner

city youth. They challenge that these schools will serve to resegregate schools, leaving poor and minority students behind. In reality, this has not been the case. Many charter schools have chosen to target students who were not succeeding in the traditional public school setting. One example is Minnesota's *City Academy* which reports that within its first two years, nearly 75% of its initial group of students (all former dropouts) had already completed graduation requirements. Other schools are being established within minority communities by their leaders who had long felt their children were not being served adequately. One example is *I'Tom Escuela of Centro de Amistad*, a trilingual/ tricultural (Spanish/English/Yaqui) community-based school being organized in part by the town of Guadalupe, AZ. Although charter schools will by no means solve all the problems for inner city, minority youth, results to date reveal they are certainly not the "evil" they are often made out to be.

✓ **Certain "Stronger" Charter School Law Elements *Do* Make a Difference.** Not all charter laws are equal in design, with various labels now being used to describe differences among charter laws: "strong v. weak," "live v. dead," and "more autonomous v. less autonomous." Four areas tend to raise the most concern and have resulted in many political compromises: (1) *organizer options* -- many want only certificated teachers to be organizers, thereby excluding many private individuals or schools from obtaining charters; (2) *sponsorship options* -- many want only the local board to be sponsors; (3) *legal and fiscal autonomy* -- many want charter schools to remain part of the district; and (4) *employee requirements/ protections* -- many want to require certification, and maintain district-level bargaining and tenure provisions.

In some states, however, charter schools can be sponsored by entities other than local boards (or have a strong appeal process), are granted a great deal of financial and legal autonomy, and are granted automatic freedom from most state and local rules (e.g., super waivers). These are considered to have "stronger" charter school laws. And, perhaps as a result, more charter school activity is occurring. For example, within nine months of the passage of Arizona's law, 40 charters have been approved. In other states with "weaker" laws, charter schools remain a part of their district, have limited control over budget and personnel matters, and often must seek waivers on a case-by-case basis. Generally, limited chartering activity is occurring (e.g., after 1.5 years, Georgia has only one that has received local board approval; after nine months, Kansas has none, Hawaii has one).

✓ **Unique Community and/or Business Partnerships are Being Formed, which May Lead to Enhanced Support for *All* Public Schools.** Although many public schools have long established community and business partnerships, within charter schools these relationships are often stronger and more unique. Examples of such partnerships include: the *Skills for Tomorrow Charter School*, a vocational/ technical school in Minnesota being run with support from the Teamsters Union; the *Boston Renaissance Charter School* which is being implemented through a partnership between Horace Mann Foundation and the Edison Project, and the *Atlantis Charter School* (Fall River, MA), developed by a community-wide collaboration involving leaders from the public and private sectors. Within these situations, key community and business partners are often involved in budgetary and management decisions and are realizing the complexities (and costs) inherent in operating a school. Some have predicted that overtime, this enhanced knowledge among key community and business leaders may lead to stronger support for increased funding and deregulation for *all* public schools.

✓ **Unique Learning Environments are Being Created in Response to Student and Parental Desires.** Numerous charter schools utilizing multi-age/multi-grade, Montessori-type, or back-to-basics programs have been established in response to parents. Whereas before local boards may have said "no" to these types of ideas (both for equity concerns and because saying "yes" created a whole new set of decisions), boards are now being pressured to give sound proposals real consideration. As one example, the *Community Involved Charter School*, a college-preparatory school in Colorado, is now serving some of the over 1,000 students who had previously been on a waiting list for a similar program in the area.

✓ **Larger Percentages of Existing Funds are Being Focused on Instructional Activities** -- Through the use of creative volunteers and other

efforts, some charter schools are saving money on the business side of schooling. For example, it is reported that the *Vaughn Next Century Learning Center* in Los Angeles realized a $1.2 million surplus (out of a $4.6 million budget) in addition to lowering class sizes and backfilling a district-wide teacher pay cut. These funds were used in part to purchase and raze two adjacent crack houses and to build additional classrooms.

✓ **Ripple Effects Across the Broader System are Becoming Visible.** Conceptually, charter schools are intended to not only serve the students within their walls, but to help initiate other changes. To some degree this is beginning to occur especially within states with stronger charter laws. For example, a Montessori-type program is now being offered by one Minnesota district after parents sought to establish such a program under the charter law. In response to Massachusetts' charter law (in which the State Secretary of Education sponsors such schools), the Boston Public Schools and its teacher union initiated a process to create their own charter-like schools. These types of activities could have occurred without charter school legislation, but the pressure to do so was not present.

✓ **Knowledge of the Charter Concept is Spreading.** A steady flow of articles on charter schools are beginning to appear, both within the popular press and in more scholarly journals. For example, the September, 1994, issue of *Educational Leadership* contained five articles focused on charter schools. The October 31, 1994 edition of *Time* magazine noted that charter schools are the "new hope for public schools." Former Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, writes in a recent *Education Week* commentary (March 15, 1995), that "the charter-school idea has emerged as possibly the most promising innovation." As evidence of this broader awareness, charter school legislation is being proposed within at least 15 states this spring. Although it is anyone's guess as to how many charter laws will be enacted (and the relative strength of those laws), odds appear higher in at least Florida, New Jersey, Washington, Connecticut, Idaho, and Vermont.

✓ **Charter School Critics are Becoming More Savvy in Their Opposition.** As new states enter into the debate on charter schools, it is becoming clear that those opposed to this concept are changing tactics. As noted by Kolderie and others who are analyzing what is happening across the country, the strategy now appears to be to support or promote fairly "weak" charter legislation rather than simply trying to kill the bill completely. Using Wyoming as a case in point, it was noted that the initial charter bill introduced several years ago was fairly "strong," and that it had received opposition from the teacher's union (WEA) and the school boards association. The bill which just passed, however, is perhaps the weakest yet to date, but it *did* have the support of the aforementioned groups.

✓ **Charter Schools and Laws are *Not* Immune from Problems** -- A few events underscore the fact that charter school laws have glitches to be worked out, and mismanagement can occur. For example, Michigan's initial charter school was found to have violated their state constitution in part because it usurped the state board's power to oversee public education. Although the decision is under appeal, it has caused many other states to more carefully review the provisions of their constitution as they draft their charter laws. Some charter schools have had difficulty managing administrative operations and securing buildings and capital equipment. This last point was stressed in a recent report issued by the research department of the Minnesota House of Representatives. Indeed, the revocation of Los Angeles-based *Edutrain's* charter due to financial mismanagement reveals both the accountability aspect of charter schools, but also the management challenges. [Note: a local board in Colorado revoked a charter, but this was overturned by their state board on appeal.]

◇◇◇◇

Overall, initial observations reveal that the charter school concept continues to hold great promise for the many students, parents, and teachers who believe that more can, and must, be done within a public educational setting. However, all is not clear sailing for the charter movement. Charter schools are not a panacea; nor are they for everyone. But, it is clear that they do represent a serious challenge to many long held truths regarding instructional practices, governance, regulation, and accountability.

COMPARISON OF "WEAKER/LESS AUTONOMOUS" CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS

STATE YEAR ENACTED	HAWAII 1994	GEORGIA 1993	KANSAS 1994	NEW MEXICO 1993	WISCONSIN 1993	WYOMING 1995
# Allowed in State *# Approved (as of 4/1/95)*	25 (1)	no limit (1 w/ local bd. approval)	15 (0)	5 (4)	10 (10)	no limit (just passed)
Automatically Free from Most State Education Code/ District Rules -- "Super Waiver"	yes, except: collective bargaining, procurement, discrimination, health and safety requirements	no, only those agreed to in charter	no, must apply to state and/or district for waivers	no, must apply to state for waivers	exempt from most state laws, but not district policies	no exemptions authorized beyond those given to all public schools
Legally Autonomous	not sure; teachers remain employees of state (i.e., district)	no, under local board authority	no, under local board authority	no, under local board authority	no, under local board authority	no, under local board authority
Automatically Autonomous for 100% Operations" Funding	intent is "yes"; in reality may only receive the average per pupil amount given to education department	no, funding amount is established in charter	no, funding amount is established in charter	no, appropriate administrative costs can be withheld	no, funding amount is established in charter	no, remains part of district and under local board control
Length of Charter	4 years	up to 5 years	3 years	5 years	up to 5 years	up to 5 years
Private School Eligibility for Charter Status	no	no	no	no	no	no
Organizers	existing public schools	any Georgia public school faculty/staff	a school building, a school district employees group, an educational services contractor, or any other person or entity	existing public schools	any individual or the local school board	any person may circulate a petition
Sponsor	state board of education reviews/accepts plan	the local school board	the local school board	state board of education	the local school board	the local school board
Final Approval	none needed	state board of education	state board of education ensures that charters approved by districts do not violate federal, state laws	none needed	state superintendent	none needed
Appeals Process	none	state board allows resubmission of petition	none	none	none	none
Support Needed from Teacher/Staff/ Parents for School Conversion	3/5ths of school's admin., teachers, support staff, and parents	majority of faculty and staff & majority of parents in meeting to initiate petition	charters must describe the level of interest and support from district employees, parents, and community	65% of faculty, and documented parent involvement and support	10% of teachers in district or 50% at a school in district	10% teachers w/in district *Or* 50% w/in school *And* 10% parents w/in district or 50% parents w/in school

— = not addressed in legislation

Prepared by: Lewann Bierlein and Lori Mulholland
Morrison Institute for Public Policy, Arizona State University
(602-965-4525), April 1995

COMPARISON OF "STRONGER/MORE AUTONOMOUS" CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS

STATE YEAR ENACTED	ARIZONA 1994	CALIFORNIA 1992	COLORADO 1993	MASSACHUSETTS 1993	MICHIGAN 1995	MINNESOTA 1991

Number Allowed in State
 	
# Approved (as of 4/1/95) 	
	unlimited for local board sponsorship;
	25 per year per state board
	
	(40 w/ initial approval)
		100
		
		(83; as of 4/14/95)
			50 up to July, 1997, after which limit is removed
			
			(25)
				25; # of charter students not to exceed 0.75 of 1% of public school students
				
				(21)
					district sponsor = no limit;
					universities = 75 total;
					com. college = 1 per
					
					(4, under law effective 4/95)
						originally 8, increased to 35 in 1994
						
						(17)

Automatically Free from <u>Most</u> State Education Code/District Rules -- "Super Waiver"	yes, except: health, safety, civil rights, audit and student assessments, special ed., insurance	yes, except: health safety, civil rights, state pupil assessments	no, only from state/district policies as agreed to in charter	yes, except: health, safety, civil rights, state pupil assessments	it is still unclear what laws, if any, charter schools will be exempt from	yes, except: health, safety, civil rights, audits, special education
Legally Autonomous	yes, if state sponsored; depends on charter if local board sponsored	depends on charter	no, under local board authority	yes, organized as non-profit corporation	yes, organized as non-profit	yes, organized as non-profit, cooperative
Automatically Autonomous for 100% "Operations" Funding	generally yes -- if local bd. sponsored., receive at least district's average cost/ pupil; if state sponsored, state formula is used	generally yes	no, but will get at least 80%	generally yes	generally yes	generally yes
Length of Charter	5 years	up to 5 years	up to 5 years	5 years	up to 10 years	up to 3 years
"Existing" Private School Eligibility for Charter Status	yes, must be nonsectarian and convert to public charter status	no	no	no	yes, must be nonsectarian and convert to public charter status	yes, must be nonsectarian and convert to public charter status
Organizers	any public body, private person, or private organization	any individual can circulate a petition to start a school	any individual or group	≥ 2 certified teachers, or ≥ 10 parents, or any other individuals, groups	any individual or entity	licensed teachers
Sponsor	1) any local school board; 2) State Board of Education; or 3) State Board for Charter Schools	the local school board or county board on appeal	the local school board	state secretary of education	1) local boards (of larger districts); 2) intermediate district boards; 3) community college, or 4) public univ.	any local school board, or the State Board on appeal
Final Approval	none needed	none needed	none needed	none needed	none needed (but state bd can disapprove or revoke for just cause; dept. can w/hold funding)	state board of education
Appeals Process	none; can seek other sponsor	county board of education	state board of education	none	can seek alternate sponsor, or if local district denies, organizers may place on next school election ballot	state board of education
Charter School Teacher Certification	charter must specify employee qualifications; certification *not* required	charter must specify required employee qualifications; certification *not* required	certified teachers only (unless approved for waiver)	charter must specify required employee qualifications; certification *not* required	certification required (per state board rule); except cc/univ. sponsored can use own higher ed. faculty	certified teachers only

Prepared by: Louann Bierlein and Lori Mulholland
Morrison Institute for Public Policy, Arizona State University
(602-965-4525), April 1995